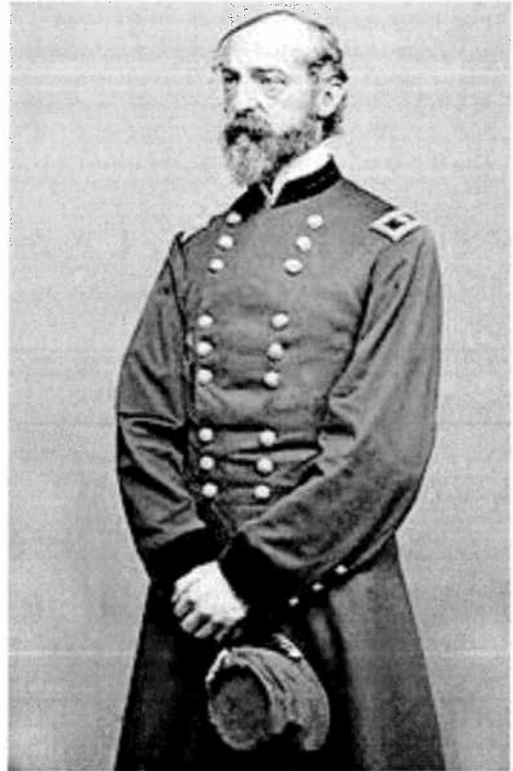


Name: _____ Section: _____ Date: _____

George Meade Biography

George Meade - Early Life:

Born at Cádiz, Spain on December 31, 1815, George Gordon Meade was the son of Richard and Margaret Meade. A Philadelphia merchant living in Spain, Meade served as a US naval agent in Cádiz until his death in 1828. Shortly after his passing, the family returned to the United States and young George was sent to school in Baltimore, MD. With the family facing a difficult financial situation, Meade elected to enter West Point in 1831. Graduating 19th in a class of 56, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1835 and assigned to the 3rd US Artillery.



George Meade - Early Career:

Dispatched to Florida to fight the Seminoles, Meade soon fell ill with fever and was transferred to the Watertown Arsenal in Massachusetts. Recovering, he left the army in 1836 and began working as an engineer surveying new lines for railroad companies. Marrying Margaretta Sergeant in 1840, he found steady work increasingly difficult to obtain. In 1842, he re-entered the US Army and was made a lieutenant of topographical engineers. Assigned to Texas in 1845, he served as a staff officer in Major General Zachary Taylor's army after the outbreak of the Mexican-American War the following year.

Present at Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma, he was promoted to first lieutenant for gallantry at the Battle of Monterrey. Returning to Philadelphia after the conflict, he spent the bulk of the next decade designing lighthouses and conducting coastal surveys on the East Coast. Promoted to captain in 1856, he was ordered west the following year to oversee a survey of the Great Lakes. Publishing his report in 1860, he remained on the Great Lakes until the outbreak of the Civil War in April 1861.

George Meade - The Civil War:

Returning east, he was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers on August 31 at the recommendation of Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin and given command of the 2nd Brigade, Pennsylvania Reserves. Initially assigned to Washington, DC, his men built fortifications around the city until being assigned to Major General George McClellan's newly formed Army of the Potomac. Moving south in the spring of 1862, Meade took part in McClellan's Peninsula Campaign until being wounded at the Battle of Glendale on June 30. Quickly recovering, he rejoined his men in time for the Second Battle of Manassas in late August.

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In the course of the fighting, his brigade took part in the vital defense of Henry House Hill which allowed the remainder of the army to escape after the defeat. Shortly after the battle he was given command of the 3rd Division, I Corps. Moving north at the beginning of the Maryland Campaign, he performed well at the Battle of South Mountain and again three days later at Antietam. When his corps commander, Major General Joseph Hooker, was wounded, Meade was selected by McClellan to take over. Leading I Corps for the remainder of the battle, he was wounded in the thigh.

Returning to his division, Meade achieved the only Union success during the Battle of Fredericksburg that December when his men drove back the troops of Lieutenant General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson. His success was not exploited and his division was forced to fall back. In recognition for his actions, he was promoted to major general. Given command of V Corps on December 25, he commanded it at the Battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. During the course of the battle, he implored Hooker, now the army commander, to be more aggressive but to no avail.

George Meade - Taking Command:

Following his victory at Chancellorsville, General Robert E. Lee began moving north to invade Pennsylvania with Hooker in pursuit. Arguing with his superiors in Washington, Hooker was relieved on June 28 and command was offered to Major General John Reynolds. When Reynolds declined, it was offered to Meade who accepted. Assuming command of the Army of the Potomac at Frederick, MD, Meade continued to move after Lee. Known to his men as "The Old Snapping Turtle," Meade had reputation for a short temper and possessed little patience for the press or civilians.

George Meade - Gettysburg:

Three days after taking command, two of Meade's corps encountered the Confederates at Gettysburg. Opening the Battle of Gettysburg, they were mauled but succeeded in holding favorable ground for the army. Rushing his men to the town, Meade won a decisive victory over the next two days and effectively turned the tide of the war in the East. Though triumphant, he was soon criticized for failing to aggressively pursue Lee's battered army and deliver a war-ending blow. Following the enemy back to Virginia, Meade conducted ineffective campaigns at Bristoe and Mine Run that fall.

George Meade - Under Grant:

In March 1864, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant was appointed lead all Union armies. Understanding that Grant would come east and citing the importance of winning the war, Meade offered to resign from his army command if the new commander preferred to appoint someone different. Impressed by Meade's gesture, Grant refused the offer. Though Meade retained command of the Army of the Potomac, Grant made his headquarters with the army for the remainder of the war. This proximity led to a somewhat awkward relationship and command structure.

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That May, the Army of the Potomac embarked on the Overland Campaign with Grant issuing orders to Meade who in turn issued them to the army. Meade largely performed well as the fighting progressed through the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House, but chafed at Grant's interference in the army's matters. He also took issue with Grant's perceived preference for officers who had served with him in the west as well as his willingness to absorb heavy casualties. Conversely, some within Grant's camp felt that Meade was too slow and cautious. As the fighting reached Cold Harbor and Petersburg, Meade's performance began to slip as he did not direct his men to scout properly prior to the former battle and failed to coordinate his corps properly in the opening stages of the latter.

During the siege of Petersburg, Meade again erred altering the attack plan for the Battle of the Crater for political reasons. Remaining in command throughout the siege, he fell ill on the eve of the final breakthrough in April 1865. Unwilling to miss the army's final battles, he led the Army of the Potomac from an army ambulance during the Appomattox Campaign. Though he made his headquarters near Grant's, he did not accompany him to the surrender talks on April 9.

George Meade - Later Life

With the end of the war, Meade remained in the service and moved through various department commands on the East Coast. In 1868, he took over the Third Military District in Atlanta and oversaw Reconstruction efforts in Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. Four years later, he was struck by a sharp pain in his side while in Philadelphia. An aggravation of the wound sustained at Glendale, he declined rapidly and contracted pneumonia. After a brief fight, he succumbed on November 7, 1872, and was buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia.

Comprehension Questions:

- 1) Where was George Meade born? _____
- 2) During Meade's early military career he was involved in two events that we talked about this year. What were they? 1) _____ 2) _____
- 3) Early in the Civil War, Meade was in charge of soldiers who built fortifications to defend _____.
- 4) The Battle of Gettysburg occurred only _____ days after Mead took command of the Union Army.
- 5) Why was Meade criticized after the Union victory at Gettysburg? _____

- 6) In a sentence or two, describe Meade's performance after Grant was promoted above him. Defend your statement with at least one detail. _____

- 7) What lead to George Meads' death in 1872? _____

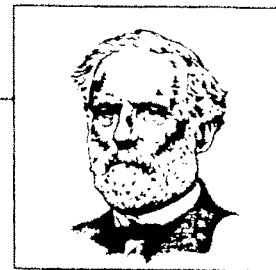
Chapter 16 Section 1 War Erupts

America's History Makers

Robert E. Lee

Confederate General

Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) was commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. He led troops for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Lee was a brilliant general. He managed to win battles and keep Southern armies in the field against great odds.



Robert E. Lee was the fourth child of a leading Virginia family. Lee's relatives on both sides lived on great plantations. His father, Henry Lee, had been a cavalry leader during the Revolution. He received the nickname "Light-Horse Harry" for his bravery. Henry Lee also served as Governor of Virginia after the Revolution. When George Washington died, Lee wrote these famous words: "First in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Like his father, Robert E. Lee would also adopt George Washington as his model of what a man should be.

West Point Henry Lee's death when Robert was still a child left his mother with seven children and little money. Lee was strongly influenced by his widowed mother. He tried to do well at every task he faced. Lee's first major success came at West Point, the United States Military Academy.

Confederate general Joseph Johnston attended West Point with Robert E. Lee. Johnston said Lee's natural superiority won "warm friendship" and commanded "high respect." While at West Point, Lee was appointed corps adjutant. A cadet could win no higher rank. In 1829, Lee graduated second in his class.

Early Military Achievements Lee won his first commission to the army corps of engineers. He was stationed as an assistant engineer in Fort Monroe, Virginia. There he met and married Martha Washington's great-granddaughter, Mary Anna Randolph Custis. Mary's family mansion became the Lees' home. This mansion, Arlington, still overlooks Washington, D.C. The Lees eventually had seven children.

The Mexican War, in 1846, gave Lee his first chance to display his abilities on a national stage.

Lee's engineering skills allowed American troops to cross difficult Mexican mountain passes. During the war, Lee was promoted, first to major, then to lieutenant colonel, and finally to colonel. General Winfield Scott, who led American forces in this war, said that his "success in Mexico was largely due to the skill, valor, and undaunted courage of Robert E. Lee . . . the greatest military genius in America." But in the United States, another war was brewing. When the Civil War began in 1861, Lee and Scott found themselves on opposing sides.

A Reluctant Decision Lee realized that staying in the army would mean he must invade his native Virginia. Instead, Lee chose to resign. In a letter to General Scott, his commander-in-chief, Lee noted that he had devoted more than 25 years to army service.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

It [the letter of resignation] would have been presented at once but for the struggle it has cost me to separate myself from a service to which I have devoted the best years of my life, and all the ability I possessed. . . . I shall carry to the grave the most grateful recollections of your kind consideration, and your name and fame shall always be dear to me. Save in defense of my native State, I never desire again to draw my sword.

ROBERT E. LEE, quoted in
Robert E. Lee, A Life Portrait

Lee's reluctance to resign from the army also stemmed from his patriotism. In a letter to his sister, he said that he considered the South to be in "a state of revolution" and that he recognized "no necessity for this state of things." Lee did not favor secession. Further, he did not believe in slavery. He had freed his few slaves before the Civil War.

But in time, Robert E. Lee came to believe that defending Virginia meant protecting the freedoms George Washington had won for the American colonies. Lee was appointed commander-in-chief of Virginia's troops. As such, he became the architect of the Confederacy's military strategy.

Civil War General With much less manpower than the North, Lee had to mass his forces where the Union Army might invade. After Confederate troops turned back Union forces at the first Battle of Bull Run, the long war started in earnest.

Lee knew the Confederates lacked the strength to win in the field. At the beginning of the war, he kept the Union army away from Richmond. There, arms were produced. He also kept Union forces far from the farms of northern Virginia. He tried to win victories that would weaken the enemy's will to fight. He won a major victory at Chancellorsville in May 1863. There, he divided his forces and circled the Union army, which outnumbered his forces by two to one.

The End Is Near But as the war dragged on, Lee's army began to shrink. In contrast, the Federal forces maintained their strength. Under Ulysses S. Grant, Union armies began to approach Confederate strongholds such as Richmond and Petersburg in 1864. Lee built fortifications into permanent lines. Like trenches, these lines allowed Lee's armies to defend against Grant's siege of the Virginia cities for almost a year. But General Lee knew that the end would be "a mere question of time." On April 2, 1865, Grant broke Lee's defenses, and the Confederate retreat began. Lee surrendered to Grant on April 9, 1865. A Union officer described Lee in these words.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

There behind me, riding in between my two lines, appeared a commanding form, superbly mounted, richly [dressed], of imposing bearing, noble countenance, with expression of deep sadness

overmastered by deeper strength. It is no other than Robert E. Lee! And seen by me for the first time within my own lines. I sat immovable, with a certain awe and admiration.

JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN, quoted in
Robert E. Lee, A Life Portrait

After the War Lee took a few months to recover from the exhaustion of the war and surrender. However, he never regained his health. To support his large family, Lee became the president of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. The college and its library had been looted during the war. Only 50 students were enrolled. By the fall term of 1870, enrollment had risen to almost 400. Lee advised his students to keep the peace and accept reunion with the North. "Make your sons Americans," Lee urged his fellow Southerners. After Lee's death in 1870, the college was renamed Washington and Lee University.

Review Questions

1. How did Robert E. Lee's family background influence his drive to succeed?
2. Why did Lee oppose the Civil War?
3. How did Lee's engineering background play a role in the South's defenses near the end of the Civil War?

Critical Thinking

4. **Summarizing** Explain the important influence of George Washington on the life of Robert E. Lee.
5. **Finding Main Ideas** How did Lee think the South might win the Civil War despite its weakness compared to the North?
6. **Supporting Opinions** Do you think the Civil War might have been shorter had Lee kept his post in the U.S. Army? Explain.